

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENNA 7997

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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SPOP, AU, YO

SUBJECT: SLOVENE MINORITY IN AUSTRIA

REF: VIENNA 8741 OF DECEMBER 1972

1. SUMMARY: AUSTRO-YUGOSLAV CONTROVERSY OVER ALLEGED MAL-TREATMENT OF SLOVENE MINORITY IN CARINTHIA HAS AGAIN BECOME ENFLAMED AS LOCAL PROTAGONISTS IN CARINTHIA ENGAGE IN NEW ROUND OF WHAT TERMED "PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS". LATTER HAVE INCLUDED ERECTION OF SLOVENE PARTISAN MONUMENT AND ITS SUBSEQUENT DESTRUCTION BY DYNAMITE, SMEARING OF ROADSIGNS AND MINOR DEMONSTRATIONS. ISSUE IS HEAVILY BURDENED BY HISTORICAL RESENTMENTS OF BORDERLAND POPULATIONS AND CARINTHIAN PROVINCIAL POLITICS. SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRIA (GOA) IS ATTEMPTING TO DAMPEN AROUSED AUSTRO-GERMAN NATIONALIST FEELINGS AND ENGAGE SLOVENE MINORITY IN DIALOGUE BUT DOMESTIC POLITICS DO NOT ALLOW GOA MUCH FLEXIBILITY OF ACTION. GOVERNMENT OF YUGOSLAVIA (GOY) HAS REPEATEDLY DISCUSSED ISSUE OF SLOVENE MINORITY TREATMENT WITH GOA WITHOUT, HOWEVER, REACHING ANY MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE RESOLUTION OF PROBLEM. RESULT IS WORSENING OF AUSTRO-YUGOSLAV REALTIONS. SHORT RUN OUTLOOK FOR RESOLUTION OF ISSUE IS NOT ENCOURAGING;

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LONGER RUN PROSPECTS, ACCORDING TO AUSTRIAN FOREIGN

OFFICE, SEEM BIT MORE PROMISING. END SUMMARY.

2. ISSUE OF TREATMENT ACCORDED SLOVENE MINORITY IN SOUTHERN CARINTHIA, AUSTRIAN PROVINCE ADJOINING YUGOSLAVIA, HAS ONCE AGAIN GENERATED INCREASED TENSION BETWEEN LOCAL PROTAGONISTS IN CARINTHIA AND BETWEEN GOA AND GOY. AT LOCAL LEVEL SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS AND LEADERS OF HEIMATDIENST, AUSTRO-GERMAN ULTRA-NATIONALIST ORGANIZATION, HAVE BECOME ENGAGED IN MAJOR STRUGGLE OVER WHAT EACH CONSIDERS CRUCIAL MATTER OF ETHNIC IDENTITY OF AREA AND HOW MUCH IDENTITY SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AND PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED.

3. SLOVENE MINORITY POSITION, IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT, IS THAT AREA NOW KNOWN AS CARINTHIA WAS SETTLED AT EARLY AGE BY SLOVENES, THAT LATER ARRIVING AUSTRO-GERMANS CARRIED OUT PURPOSEFUL POLICY OF ASSIMILATION OF SLOVENE INHABITANTS AND THAT OVER YEARS SLOVENE ETHNIC BORDER HAS BEEN PUSHED BACK AND SLOVENES HAVE BEEN ROBBED OF THEIR LEGITIMATE HERITAGE. PLEBISCITE OF 1921, IN FAILING TO SUPPORT CLAIM OF ACTIVIST SLOVENE GROUPS TO JOINING AREA TO YUGOSLAVIA, WAS MAJOR BLOW TO SLOVENE TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS. SECOND ATTEMPT AT ESTABLISHING SLOVENE CONTROL--FORCEFUL OCCUPATION OF SOUTHERN CARINTHIA BY YUGOSLAV PARTISANS AT END OF WORLD WAR II--WAS UNDONE BY WESTERN ALLIES.

4. SUBSTANCE OF CURRENT SLOVENE MINORITY CLAIM THEREFORE NOW RESTS LARGELY ON ARTICLE 7 OF 1955 AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY WHICH PROVIDES FOR EQUALITY OF ETHNIC TREATMENT REGARDING EDUCATION, CULTURE, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND JUSTICE IN AREA IN QUESTIONS. ARTICLE 7 ALSO SPECIFICALLY PROVIDES THAT ROADSIGNS SHALL BE IN SLOVENE AS WELL AS GERMAN LANGUAGE. SLOVENE GROUPS IN CARINTHIA CHARGE THAT GOA IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN INDIFFERENT AND THAT AS RESULT SLOVENE MINORITY IS BEING IN EFFECT DEPRIVED OF ITS CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AS PROVIDED IN 1955 TREATY.

5. MILITANT AUSTRO-GERMAN NATIONALIST ELEMENTS HAVE
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PRIVATELY HELD VIEWPOINT THAT SLOVENE MINORITY DESERVES SIMILAR FATE TO THAT METED OUT TO AUSTRO-GERMANS WHO, FINDING THEMSELVES IN YUGOSLAV STATE WHEN FOUNDED IN 1918, HAVE EITHER BEEN EXPELLED, STATISTICALLY ASSIMILATED OR NOT RECOGNIZED AS MINORITY WITHIN YUGOSLAVIA. PUBLICLY NATIONALIST ELEMENTS HAVE TAKEN STAND THAT ETHNIC CENSUS OF POPULATION MUST FIRST BE CARRIED OUT TO ESTABLISH EXACT LOCATION AND SIZE OF SLOVENE MINORITY. THIS POSITION

BASED ON PROBABLY CORRECT ASSUMPTION THAT ACCURATE CENSUS
WOULD SHOW FURTHER DECLINE IN SIZE OF SLOVENE MINORITY
(17,000 ACCORDING 1971 CENSUS) AND THAT THEREFORE, BY
IMPLICATION, PROBLEM IS LARGELY ARTIFICIAL ONE, PROMOTED
BY SLOVENE COMPATRIOTS IN YUGOSLAVIA. MAJOR OBJECTIVE
OF NATIONALISTS, IN PRESSING FOR NEW CENSUS, IS TO PREVENT
ANY CO-IDENTIFICATION OF MINORITY RIGHTS WITH TERRITORIAL
RIGHTS. THIS TACTIC AIMED PARTICULARLY AT COUNTERING
EFFORT BY SLOVENE GROUP TO CLAIM LEOPARD SPOT DISTRIBUTION
IN SOUTHERN CARINTHIA WHERE, FOR REASONS OF EFFECTIVE
ADMINISTRATION, MINORITY RIGHTS AS CONCERN EDUCATION,
JUSTICE, GOVERNMENT AND ROADSIGNS SHOULD THEN APPLY TO
ENTIRE REGION OF SOUTHERN CARINTHIA.

6. CONVERSELY, SLOVENE MINORITY HAS BEEN ADAMANT IN ITS
STAND THAT ARTICLE 7 DOES NOT CONTAIN ANY PRECONDITION OF
CENSUS FOR ITS OBSERVANCE AND THAT GOA, BY FOLLOWING COURSE
OF LEAST RESISTANCE IN FULFILLMENT OF ARTICLE 7, IS IN
FACT AVOIDING ITS RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TREATY LAW AND
BECOMING PASSIVE PARTNER TO VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
OF MINORITY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENNA 7997

7. IN FALL 1972, CONTROVERSY TOOK UGLY TURN WHEN
AUSTRO-GERMAN NATIONALIST ELEMENTS PULLED DOWN AND
DESTROYED BILINGUAL RAODSIGNS WHICH PROVINCIAL GOVERN-

MENT ERECTED ON SHORT NOTICE ON BASIS BELATED PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION AND WITHOUT PROPER PREPARATION OF PUBLIC FOR MOVE. RELATED SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS SAW SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT OF CARINTHIA SUBJECTED TO HARASSMENT AND PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION BY PROTESTING AUSTRO-GERMAN NATIONALIST ELEMENTS. INTERCESSION OF GOA IN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTAL POLITICAS IN EFFORT TO CALM AROUSED EMOTIONS HAS LED TO MUTUAL RECRIMINATION IN SOCIALIST PARTY RANKS AND WAS CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO POOR SHOWING OF SOCIALISTS IN RECENT PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS IN CARINTHIA. THE PEOPLE'S PARTY, MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY, HAS WATCHED WITH GENERAL SATISFACTION DIFFICULTIES BESETTING SOCIALIST WHILE AVOIDING AT SAME TIME TAKING ANY CLEAR STAND ON ISSUE. FREEDOM PARTY, MINOR RIGHT-WING OPPOSITION PARTY, HAS SOUGHT, PART SUCCESSFULLY, TO CHAMPION CAUSE OF MILITANT NATIONALIST ELEMENTS.

8. MORE RECENTLY, LOCAL SLOVENE AND AUSTRO-GERMAN PROTAGONISTS HAVE ENGAGED IN WHAT EACH SIDE TERMS PROVOCATIVE ACTS BY OTHER SIDE. THESE HAVE INCLUDED RECENT ERECTION AND SUBSEQUENT DESTRUCTION BY DYNAMITE OF MONUMENT HONORING CONFIDENTIAL

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SLOVENE PARTISANS WHO FOUGHT IN AREA AGAINST FACISTS DURING WORLD WAR II, PLANNED ERECTION BY NATIONALIST ON OCTOBER 7 OF STATUE OF VICTIMS OF PARTISAN ACTIVITIES, FREQUENT SMEARING OF ROADSIGNS, LOCAL BRAWLS AND MINOR DEMONSTRATIONS.

9. GOY HAS FROM TIME TO TIME DISCUSSED WITH GOA ISSUE OF TREATMENT OF SLOVENE MINORITY AND OF INCOMPLETE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 7. GOA RESPONSE HAS BEEN THAT MATTER IS VERY COMPLEX ONE, ENTWINED WITH ANCIENT ANTIPATHIES AND VIRULENT NATIONAL EMOTIONS; THAT WITH EXEPTION OF ROADSIGNS ISSUE, ARTICLE 7 HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED; THAT ISSUE OF ROADSIGNS SHOULD BE KEPT OUT OF BILATERAL POLITICAL ARENA AND GIVEN TO COMMISSION OF EXPERTS FOR CAREFUL STUDY AND THAT WHILE AUSTRIA RECOGNIZES ITS RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF 1955 TREATY, MORE TIME IS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE ACCEPTABLE RESOLUTION OF PROBLEM.

10. AT MOMENT GOA IS ATTEMPTING TO DEAL WITH ISSUE ON LOCAL, FEDERAL AND AUSTRO-YUGOSLAV LEVELS. COMMISSION OF EXPERTS HAS BEEN CONSTITUTED TO ADVISE GOA ON MATTER CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 7. AT SAME TIME, GOA HAS BEGUN DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF SLOVENE MINORITY FROM CARINTHIA, WITH PURPOSE OF KEEPING LEADERS OF MINORITY CONSTRUCTIVELY ENGAGED IN SEEKING COMPROMISE SOLUTION TO ISSUE. ATTENDANCE AT FIRST MEETING OF CHANCELLOR KREISKY WHO IS CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNMENT LIAISON COMMITTEE SERVED TO UNDERLINE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH GOA

HANDLING MATTER. FINALLY, GOA IS IN TOUCH WITH GOY ON ISSUE AND, ACCORDING TO FOREIGN OFFICE, FOREIGN MINISTER KIRCHSCHLAEGER PLANS TO DISCUSS ISSUE WITH YUGOSLAV FOREIGN MINISTER IN NEW YORK AT UNGA SESSION.

11. GOA EFFORT TO DATE ON ISSUE HAS BEEN STRONG ON PROMISES BUT UNSATISFACTORY IN PERFORMANCE. FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL REASONS, GOA HAS THUS FAR NOT MET ISSUE HEAD-ON; INSTEAD IT HAS LEFT MATTER UNTIL RECENTLY IN HANDS OF CARINTHIAN PROVINCIAL POLITICIANS WHO HAVE NEITHER PROVIDED APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP ON ISSUE NOR GAUGED ACCURATELY INTENSITY OF NATIONALIST FEELING AMONG THEIR OWN CONSTITUENTS ON THIS ISSUE. LOCAL PROTAGONISTS HAVE, IN TURN, CALLED ON THEIR RESPECTIVE SUPPORTERS IN AUSTRIA AND YUGOSLAVIA AND
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HAVE SUCCEEDED IN ESCALATING MINOR IRRITANT IN AUSTRO-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS INTO MAJOR ISSUE. IMMEDIATE RESULT THEREOF HAS BEEN AN EVIDENT WORSENING OF AUSTRO-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS.

12. IN CONTEXT OF SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY, GOA HAS MAJOR AND CONTINUING CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IT CONSIDERS GROWING IRREDENTISM OF EXTREME ELEMENTS ON YUGOSLAV SIDE OF BORDER, LEADING TO APPREHENSIONS REGARDING POSSIBLE COURSE OF EVENTS FOLLOWING PASSAGE OF TITO FROM SCENE.

13. WELL-INFORMED GOA SOURCES APPEAR SOMEWHAT PESSIMISTIC CONCERNING SHORTRUN PROSPECT FOR RESOLUTION OF PROBLEM. WITH NATIONAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR 1975, AUSTRIAN SOCIALIST PARTY IS HARD PRESSED TO AVOID TAKING ANY ACTION, SUCH AS ALLEGED CONCESSIONS TO MINORITIES, WHICH COULD COST PARTY ITS SMALL MAJORITY IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THEREFORE, GOA WILL IN ALL LIKELIHOOD ATTEMPT TO MANAGE BUT NOT RESOLVE CONTROVERSY IN NEXT PERIOD.

14. AT SAME TIME, EMBASSY'S FOREIGN OFFICE SOURCES APPEAR TO FEEL THAT LONGER TERM PROSPECTS HOLD GREATER PROMISE FOR RESOLUTION OF ISSUE. GOA FEELS THAT MUCH MORE TIME IS NEEDED TO PUT TOGETHER SCENARIO WHICH COULD ELICIT SUPPORT OF MAJOR INTERESTED GROUPS. THIS LINE OF REASONING SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO AUSTRIAN EXPERIENCE WITH LENGTHY PERIOD OF TIME NEEDED FOR RESOLUTION OF SOUTH TIROL CONFLICT. HUMES

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